

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

June 28, 2019

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, June 28, 2019, at the Crowne Plaza Times Square hotel in New York, N.Y. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Cathy B., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

## General Manager's Report

General Manager Greg T. provided the following report:

*Administration* – The ERP NetSuite implementation is in its final weeks. The go-live date is the week of August 5, 2019. The systems implementation, which will take place during and immediately after the July General Service Board weekend, is the highest overall priority of the organization at this time.

Since the conclusion of the 69th General Service Conference, the office has been engaged in the implementation of Advisory Actions, as well as sharing committee reports for appropriate follow-up. The first original book to be published by A.A. World Services in nearly 30 years, *Our Great Responsibility*, has been published in English, French and Spanish. (Sales figures are noted in the report of the Finance Committee.) Work continues in the office on the strategic communications initiatives of the General Service Board. A rough draft of a three-year communications strategic plan will be presented to the General Service Board in July. Planning for the 2020 International Convention is on-track, with the Convention just a year away. Two new G.S.O. staff members have been hired: Brenda B., formerly of the Memphis Intergroup, and Irene D., former editor of *La Viña*; both are slated to begin work in July. Information-gathering continues on the projected acquisition of an additional 5,000 square feet of office space on the 8th floor of 475 Riverside Drive.

*Information Technology Services* – In addition to support of the ERP implementation, the IT Services team continues to improve the connectivity to our hosted servers as well as reducing the number of active servers needed. As a result of the IT Audit, computers and laptops are being upgraded to add hard drive encryption and additional memory as needed.

*Archives* – So far this year, Archives staff has responded to approximately 625 requests for information and accessioned 67 new items, both paper and digital. A new printing of the Archives Workbook was completed in May, along with a new service piece titled “Archives Checklist: A quick guide for local A.A. archivists.”

*Human Resources* – All employees have been assigned a compliance course on Sexual Harassment prevention through the online HR portal. Employee Recognition Day was held at Rye Playland for an outing of fun and team-building activities and was followed up with an Employee Recognition Ceremony

highlighting service anniversaries and recognition awards. Additionally, the department is engaged in ongoing evaluation of options for the upcoming insurance renewal.

### May-June Travel:

May 31-June 2: Northeast Regional Forum, Tarrytown, NY.

June 5-10: Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting, Johannesburg, South Africa.

## Staff Report

*Accessibilities/LIM* – The assignment is working to implement changes to Accessibilities service material reviewed and agreed to by the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities. These changes help differentiate deaf and hard-of-hearing and update the material to emphasize helping alcoholics with hearing difficulties participate in all Three Legacies.

*Conference* – An electronic interim report (anonymity-protected) on the 69th Conference was produced and distributed to Conference members to support delegate reporting due to the lateness of this year's Conference. A request for sharing on the following question related to one of the General Service Board Strategic Plan items is being sent to delegates: In your area what do you believe are the different underrepresented populations of suffering alcoholics that the area could focus on carrying the A.A. message to?

*C.P.C./Treatment* – The C.P.C. assignment is working on the Summer 2019 edition of *About A.A.* So far in 2019, 12 national exhibits have been coordinated, with 16 more to be completed. The Treatment assignment has been providing shared experience to local committees interested in presentations on sponsorship in Treatment settings.

*Corrections* – Following a positive response to a mailing to Corrections/Bridging the Gap/H&I Area Chairpersons noting the need for men to write to inmates through the CCS, 200 male inmates received an outside correspondent and there is no longer a waiting list.

*International* – G.S.O. Mexico has completed the Spanish translation of the anonymity-protected digital version of the 25th WSM Final Report. It has been added to the A.A. website.

*International Convention* – An article highlighting A.A.’s 85th birthday celebration at the 2020 International Convention in Detroit was finalized for the Summer issue of *Box 459*. *Box 459* will also include a reminder of the September 9, 2019 opening of registration for the convention.

*Literature* – Vendor selection and production concepts to update the video “Your G.S.O., A.A. Grapevine and the General Service Structure” are proceeding. This project is being approached in tandem with an introduction to Regional Forums video and the Regional Forums assignment. Adjoining the projects has allowed for a production design that will allow a cross-purposing of source footage in both videos as well as potential future projects.

*Nominating* – Notifications have been sent to delegates and appropriate area committee officers in the West Central and Western Canada Regions regarding the regional trustee vacancies which will occur following the April 2020 General Service Conference.

*Public Information* – Local P.I. committees continue to request information about radio PSAs as they approach local stations and connect station managers with G.S.O. for radio placement. Extensive updates have been made to the P.I. Workbook due to outdated content.

*Regional Forums* – The East Central Regional Forum will take place July 12-14 at the Sheraton Detroit Metro Airport in Detroit Michigan. Preparations for the West Central (August 16-18) and Southwest (October 11-13) continue apace.

## Finance

For the five months ended May 31, 2019 revenues were 3.67% higher than budgeted and 3.42% higher than the five months ended May 31, 2018. Operating expenses were 4.68% greater than budgeted and 9.83% more than last year.

Actual contributions for the five months ended May 31, 2019 were \$3,435,535, 4.76% higher than budget and 4.76% higher than the five months ended May 31, 2018. Online contributions for the first five months of 2019 amounted to \$373,706. This compared with \$369,067 in 2018, \$333,480 in 2017, 212,908 in 2016, and \$179,449 in 2015. The first five months of 2019 online contributions accounts for 10.94% of our total contributions.

The new book, *Our Great Responsibility*, has \$91,900 in sales for its first month.

There was an extensive discussion on the Professional Fees and Contracted Services lines of the financial statements. Professional fees are \$178,533 (119.02%) higher than budget and \$36,855 (12.64%) higher than 2018. These variances are mainly caused by contract reviews being over budget by \$96,347 for the first five months of the year and \$52,236 higher than last year. There are also additional lawyer fees (general counsel) that amount to \$100,150 higher than budget compared to \$80,961 higher than last year. Contracted Services are over budget by \$323,686 (46.24%) and also \$465,642 (83.44%) over last year. These variances are impacted by ERP costs amounting to \$317,956 over budget.

The new members of the Ad-Hoc Self Support commit-

tee are Beau B., Carolyn W. and Mary C. The committee will invite someone from the Grapevine Board to join the committee.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Finance Committee:

- That a draw down of \$1,000,000 be requested from the General Service Board Reserve Fund to help with current cash flow needs, with the funds to be returned by December 31, 2019.

## Publishing

The committee accepted the Publishing Department report, highlighting the following information:

*Gross sales:* May gross sales are below budget with actual gross sales at \$1,259,619, which is a \$73,793 or 5.53% negative variance against budget of \$1,333,412.

*Web sales:* Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for May stand at \$815,455, which accounts for about 65.49% of total sales for the company. Total online orders for May are 1,844, which is 74.06% of total orders. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for May are \$558,303 and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$257,152.

*Digital books:* Total ebook gross sales through May 2019 stand at \$87,986, with 22,627 units distributed.

*Audiobooks Update* – Big Book, “Twelve and Twelve” and *Living Sober*: English and Spanish audio revisions are complete/approved. French audiobook files are in Editorial review.

*American Sign Language Update* – Big Book and “Twelve and Twelve” videos: Revised videos with updated closed captioning are in review. Audios being updated with the approved audio files from the audiobooks recordings.

Twelve Concepts for World Service Audio project – English, French and Spanish versions are approved and are in post-production for placing on aa.org.

Young People’s Video (DV-10) is now titled “Young and Sober in A.A.: From Drinking to Recovery” – Subtitles for the English, French and Spanish versions are complete and approved and should be in the warehouses in 4-6 weeks.

*Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.’s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1971:* Official publication date was May 7, 2019.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Publishing Committee:

- That the 2020 International Convention Souvenir book be priced at \$12.00 per unit in English, French and Spanish.

## Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The TCS Committee reviewed the TCS Composition, Scope and Procedure and requested that the secretary return with a revision that reflects a broader range of technology in its terminology. The committee also reviewed the Website Committee Composition, Scope and Procedure and suggested that the impact of the future Communications Department

on the Composition, Scope and Procedure be considered, with further discussion to follow in July.

Reports were given by the director of IT Services and the Group Services assignment. The director of IT Services noted that the ERP Project is in its final months. Employees are working on supplementary User Acceptance Testing and data validation of first quarter 2019 data this month. Continuing upgrades are being made to computers and laptops for Windows v10 and to add hard drive encryption to all. In addition, solid state drives and additional memory will be installed in those computers that require them.

The staff member on the Group Services assignment reported that a number of service pieces have been updated. The next call with the representatives of the Intergroup/Central Office/A.A.W.S./AAGV Seminar will take place in early July. Updates on ERP and the Meeting Guide App will be reported and a review of the Advisory Actions from the 69th General Service Conference will be shared.

A report was provided by the Communication Services coordinator summarizing the website design and app progress since the last TCS meeting in March. The report focused on the website design progress highlighted by the kickoff in May, strategy overview meeting in June, ongoing content reorganization and site map revisions. The Meeting Guide app progress highlighted completion of rewriting the code, refined organization sort, addition of Daily Reflections, a new search feature, user testing and continued internationalization.

The committee reviewed and discussed a YouTube progress report and a LegitScript/Google Ads progress report and requested that the secretary move ahead with the LegitScript application.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the TCS Committee:

- That the 2019 First Quarter reports on G.S.O.'s A.A. website activities and analytics from January through March 2019 be forwarded to the trustees' Committee on Public Information as presented.

## Internal Audit

The committee reviewed the 2018 Financial Audit from Marks Paneth. The auditors didn't note any problematic areas or issues with a tax or legal implication. The audit has been provided to the trustees' Audit Committee and to all members of the G.S.B. G.S.O.'s Finance Department and the treasurer of the General Service Board are responding to recommendations from the auditors regarding the A.A.W.S. portion of the audit.

The committee received an overview of the A.A.W.S. Emergency Response-Business Continuity Plan and agreed that instituting a new plan is a priority. A project manager has been contracted for this service.

The committee noted that our legal advisor is creating an overall privacy policy for A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and the General Service Board and will check whether the policy will address all of the items that deal with privacy. Once the privacy policy is in place, the committee will focus on implementing an audit program focused on privacy.

The committee agreed to discuss vendor management topics at their next meeting, including PCI compliance, labor and insurance compliance, worker's compensation, data ownership, and content ownership. The committee noted that compliance requirements are included in current A.A.W.S. vendor contracts, but not in its RFPs.